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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION REPORT - KORAN DESECRATION -
AFGHANISTAN YUKOS TRIAL EU REFERENDUM - EU DEFENSE - ROLE OF
EUROPE
PARIS - TUESDAY, MAY 17, 2005

(A) SUBJECTS COVERED IN TODAY'S REPORT:

KORAN DESECRATION - AFGHANISTAN
YUKOS TRIAL
EU REFERENDUM - EU DEFENSE - ROLE OF EUROPE

B) SUMMARY OF COVERAGE:

THE MIXED RESULTS OF THE SUPPRESSION OF THE TRADITIONAL WHIT
MONDAY HOLIDAY AND THE EU REFERENDUM DOMINATE IN TODAY'S
COVERAGE. ANALYSES ON WHIT MONDAY AS A WORKDAY CONCLUDE FOR
THE MOST PART THAT THE FRENCH PEOPLE LACK CONFIDENCE IN THEIR
GOVERNMENT. PM RAFFARIN WILL SPEAK THIS EVENING ON FRANCE 2
TELEVISION TO EXPLAIN HIS POLICY IN FAVOR OF SOLIDARITY FOR
THE AGED. ON THE EU REFERENDUM, THE LATEST POLL GIVES THE LEAD
TO THE 'NO' WITH 51 PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS, ACCORDING TO LE
FIGARO- IPSOS. THE REFERENDUM AND RELATED ISSUES SUCH AS A
UNIFIED EU DEFENSE AND HOW CHINA PERCEIVES EUROPE ARE THE
SUBJECTS OF SEVERAL COMMENTARIES (SEE PART C), WHILE FM
BARNIER PENS AN OP-ED IN LA TRIBUNE: "THE CONSTITUTION RENDERS
A EUROPEAN DEFENSE INITIATIVE OPERATIONAL. THERE WILL BE NO
EUROPEAN STABILITY WITHOUT A JOINT EUROPEAN DEFENSE. OUR
AMBITION FOR A EUROPEAN DEFENSE AND OUR ATTACHMENT TO NATO
COMPLEMENT EACH OTHER."

AMONG THE INTERNATIONAL STORIES, THE UZBEK UPRISING IS FRONT-
PAGED IN LE FIGARO, WHILE LIBERATION NOTES THAT "INTERNATIONAL
REACTIONS ARE TIMID. FM BARNIER CALLS FOR A POLITICAL
DIALOGUE. AND SECRETARY OF STATE RICE HAS CALLED FOR REFORMS.
THE BRITISH ARE THE MOST CRITICAL. WITH FM SNOW CALLING THE
SHOOTING OF CIVILIANS 'UNJUSTIFIED.'"

THE YUKOS OIL VERDICT IS THE SUBJECT OF THE EDITORIAL IN LE
FIGARO BY PIERRE ROUSSELIN WHO ACCUSES THE KREMLIN OF "WANTING
TO GRAB RUSSIA'S OIL SECTOR." A PAGE-TWO REPORT IS TITLED "THE
YUKOS AFFAIR TARNISHES MOSCOW'S IMAGE." (SEE PART C)

NEWSWEEK'S STORY ON THE DEFACTION OF THE KORAN AT GUANTANAMO
IS CENTERED ON THE DEBATE OVER NEWSWEEK'S PARTIAL RECENTING,
THE ORIGINAL INFORMANT AND ALLEGED PRESSURES FROM THE U.S.
ADMINISTRATION. LE MONDE REPORTS ON PRESIDENT KARZAI AND HIS
CRITICISM OF THE U.S. ARMY FOR ARRESTING AFGHANS BUT ALSO
QUOTES KARZAI'S RENEWED AFFIRMATION THAT HE "WISHES TO PROLONG
THE ALLIANCE WITH THE U.S." (SEE PART C)

FINANCIAL LA TRIBUNE LEADS WITH THE REBOUND OF THE DOLLAR
"THANKS TO U.S. ECONOMIC GROWTH." IN HIS EDITORIAL PASCAL
AUBERT WONDERS ABOUT THIS UPWARD TREND: "THERE ARE MANY
AMBUSHES ON THE ROAD TO A PERMANENT STRONGER DOLLAR. BUT BUSH
II HAS APPARENTLY LEARNED FROM THE FAILURES OF BUSH I. THE
PROGRESSIVE REHABILITATION OF THE DOLLAR SHOULD LOGICALLY
CONTINUE."

(C) SUPPORTING TEXT/BLOCK QUOTES:

KORAN DESECRATION - AFGHANISTAN

"NEWSWEEK'S 'MEA CULPA'"

ALEXANDRA VOINCHET IN RIGHT-OF-CENTER FRANCE SOIR (05/17):
"WAS THE INFORMATION REVEALED BY NEWSWEEK AN INVENTION OR WAS
IT FALSE INFORMATION? OR HAS FRIENDLY 'PRESSURE' FROM THE U.S.
ADMINISTRATION LED THE WEEKLY TO RECENT ITS STORY? WHILE THE
STORY WAS PRACTICALLY IGNORED IN THE U.S., IT CAUSED MUCH
ANGER IN THE MUSLIM WORLD. WITH THE MOST VIOLENT REACTIONS IN
AFGHANISTAN. THE U.S. IS SOMEWHAT SHAKEN BY THE CONTROVERSY
AND HAS LAUNCHED AN INVESTIGATION. THE CONTROVERSY HAS INDEED
FUELED VIOLENT FEELINGS OF ANTI-AMERICANISM IN THE MUSLIM
WORLD, ALREADY EXACERBATED BY THE SCANDAL OF ABU GHARAIB."

"AMERICA'S EMBARRASSMENT"

THOMAS CANTALOUPE IN RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE PARISIEN (05/17): "WHO
IS TO BE BELIEVED? WHEN AN AMERICAN 'HIGH OFFICIAL' TELLS THE
STORY OF THE KORAN HAVING BEEN THROWN IN A TOILET IN
GUANTANAMO, THE ONLY THING NEW IS THAT THE REVELATION COMES
FROM AN AMERICAN OFFICIAL. SIMILAR INCIDENTS HAD ALREADY BEEN
REPORTED BY FORMER PRISONERS. AND AS NEWSWEEK SAYS,

`CONSIDERING OTHER INCIDENTS, THE ACT MAY APPEAR SHOCKING, BUT IT REMAINS IN THE REALM OF THE PROBABLE.' FURTHERMORE, THE DRAFT HAD BEEN SHOWN TO PENTAGON OFFICIALS WHO AT THE TIME HAD NOT DENIED THE STORY."

"KARZAI CRITICIZES THE U.S. ARMY"

FRANCOISE CHIPAUX IN LEFT-OF-CENTER LE MONDE (05/17): "KARZAI HAS INTIMATED THAT HIS NEIGHBORS WERE RESPONSIBLE FOR RECENT ANTI-AMERICAN PROTEST IN AFGHANISTAN, AND PAKISTAN IN PARTICULAR. KARZAI WHO IS WELL AWARE OF THE POLITICAL STAKES EMANATING FROM THE ANTI-AMERICAN DEMONSTRATIONS HAS CRITICIZED THE ATTITUDE OF THE U.S. ARMY BUT HAS ALSO REITERATED THAT WITHOUT IT `AFGHANISTAN WOULD IMMEDIATELY RETURN TO CHAOS.' IN SPITE OF HIS CRITICISM OF THE AMERICANS, KARZAI HAS REAFFIRMED HIS DESIRE TO PROLONG THE ALLIANCE WITH THE U.S.: `WE KNOW THAT WITHOUT OUR STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP WITH THE U.S., AFGHANISTAN CANNOT SUCCEED IN BECOMING A SOVEREIGN AND INDEPENDENT STATE.'"

YUKOS TRIAL

"GRABBING YUKOS"

PIERRE ROUSSELIN IN RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO (05/17): "THE FATE OF THE YUKOS COMPANY IS ALREADY KNOWN: IT WILL BE DISMANTLED SO THAT THE KREMLIN CAN GET ITS HANDS ON RUSSIA'S OIL INDUSTRY. IN A RUSSIA IN FULL REGRESSION, KHODOROWSKI WILL PAY THE PRICE FOR HIS TOO BLATANT SUCCESS. HE WILL BECOME AN EXAMPLE FOR BREAKING A PACT WITH THE KREMLIN WHEN HE ADVERTISED HIS POLITICAL ASPIRATIONS AND FINANCED LIBERAL RUSSIANS. BY RUINING AND HUMILIATING THE RUSSIAN MILLIONAIRE, THE MEN IN THE KREMLIN ARE PROVING THEIR AUTHORITY. WITH THE SUPPORT OF A PUBLIC OPINION MOVED BY A SPIRIT OF REVENGE, IT WILL BE EVEN EASIER FOR THEM TO GRAB OTHER RUSSIAN INDUSTRIAL SECTORS PRIVATIZED TOO QUICKLY BY YELTSIN."

EU REFERENDUM - EU DEFENSE - ROLE OF EUROPE

"THE STAKES OF A UNIFIED DEFENSE"

RETIRED ADMIRAL LACOSTE IN RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO (05/17): "THERE IS NO WORTHWHILE JOINT EUROPEAN DEFENSE WITHOUT THE SUPPORT OF THE MAJORITY OF THE PEOPLE. VOTING `YES' TO THE EU REFERENDUM MEANS ALLOWING OUR ARMIES TO PURSUE THEIR AMBITIOUS REFORMS IN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE EU EXPANSION. INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL SECURITY ISSUES CAN NO LONGER BE SEPARATED. INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC TERRORISM IS THE MOST OBVIOUS EXAMPLE IN FAVOR OF COOPERATION BETWEEN ARMIES, POLICE AND THE JUDICIAL SYSTEMS AT THE NATIONAL, EUROPEAN AND INTERNATIONAL LEVELS. A YES VOTE WILL GIVE FRANCE AND EUROPE THE MEANS TO BE CONSIDERED FULLY CREDIBLE AND RESPECTED PARTNERS AMONG THE CONCERT OF GREAT NATIONS."

"THE EU AS SEEN FROM CHINA"

PIERRE HASKI IN LEFT-OF-CENTER LIBERATION (05/17): "IT TOOK A LONG TIME FOR THE CHINESE TO ACKNOWLEDGE THAT EUROPE EXISTED. CHINA WHICH ONLY KNOWS FORCE, HAS NOW RECOGNIZED THAT ON TRADE ISSUES EUROPE SPEAKS IN ONE VOICE. BUT WHEN IT COMES TO POLITICAL EUROPE, IT IS AN ENTIRELY DIFFERENT MATTER. FOR BEIJING, THERE IS NO POLITICAL EUROPE. THE MULTIPOLARITY THAT IS EMERGING WITH CHINA'S GROWING WEIGHT ON THE INTERNATIONAL SCENE IS NOT QUITE WHAT PARIS HOPED FOR. FOR CHINA, WASHINGTON IS THE ONLY VIABLE INTERLOCUTOR. THE EUROPEANS ARE ESSENTIALLY ONLY USEFUL TO ANNOY WASHINGTON. THE AMERICANS, WHO WERE FOR A TIME DISTRACTED BY THE WAR ON TERROR, HAVE NOW PLACED THE EMERGENCE OF CHINA AT THE HEART OF THEIR WORLD STRATEGY. A RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE U.S. AND CHINA IS SLOWLY EMERGING, BASED ON WELL-UNDERSTOOD ECONOMIC INTERESTS AS WELL AS ON AN ACKNOWLEDGED STRATEGIC RIVALRY. THE EUROPEANS, WHOSE VALUES HAVE NOT MUCH IN COMMON WITH THE AMERICANS' BUT EVEN LESS WITH CHINA'S, MAY WELL LOSE THE OPPORTUNITY TO CARRY ANY WEIGHT. BECAUSE SEEN FROM BEIJING, FRANCE'S DEBATE ON THE EU CONSTITUTION IS EVOLVING AS IF THE WORLD WAS NOT ON THE MOVE, AS IF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS HAD NOT CHANGED SINCE MAASTRICHT. WHILE THE REFERENDUM AND THE CONSTITUTION WILL ALLOW THE EU TO HAVE A PRESIDENCY WITH MORE WEIGHT, IT WILL NOT BE ENOUGH TO MAKE FOR A EUROPEAN JOINT FOREIGN POLICY AND WILL NOT ELICIT RESPECT FROM CHINESE LEADERS. THE ONLY IMPACT FROM REJECTING THE CONSTITUTION WILL BE CONFIRMATION OF BEIJING'S POINT OF VIEW: THAT EUROPE DOES NOT EXIST POLITICALLY AND THAT THE CENTER OF THE SOLE WORLD POWER SITS IN WASHINGTON." WOLFF